

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, February 3, 2023

Former Arkansas State Senator Sentenced for Bribery and Tax Fraud

A former Arkansas State Senator was sentenced today to 46 months in prison in the Eastern District of Arkansas for accepting multiple bribes and tax fraud in connection with a multi-district investigation spanning the Eastern and Western Districts of Arkansas and the Western District of Missouri.

Pursuant to his global plea agreement, Jeremy Hutchinson, 48, of Little Rock, pleaded guilty on June 25, 2019, in the Eastern District of Arkansas to filing a false tax return; pleaded guilty on June 25, 2019, to an information filed in the Western District of Arkansas to conspiracy to commit federal program bribery; and pleaded guilty in the Western District of Missouri on July 8, 2019, to conspiracy to commit federal program bribery.

According to court documents, from 2010 through 2017, Hutchinson stole and misappropriated thousands of dollars in state campaign contributions for his own personal use and then filed false federal income tax returns from 2011 to 2014 to conceal his conduct. In addition, Hutchinson was hired as outside counsel by Dr. Benjamin Burris, an orthodontist who owned and operated orthodontic clinics throughout the state of Arkansas. In exchange for payments and legal work, Hutchinson pushed legislation beneficial to Burris. Hutchinson was provided legal work to conceal the corrupt nature of his arrangement. Hutchinson stole over \$10,000 in state campaign funds for his own personal use and also falsified his 2011 tax returns, including failing to report \$20,000-per-month-payments he received from one law firm and other sources of income he knowingly and intentionally concealed from his taxes.

Hutchinson is still pending sentencing in the Western District of Missouri for his role in a separate multimillion-dollar public corruption scheme that involved embezzlement, bribes, and illegal campaign contributions for elected public officials. According to court documents, Hutchinson accepted bribes in the form of monthly legal retainers and other things of value from employees and executives of Preferred Family Healthcare Inc. (formerly known as Alternative Opportunities Inc.), a Springfield, Missouri-based health care charity. In exchange for the bribes, Hutchinson provided favorable legislative and official action for the charity.

In 2022, Preferred Family Healthcare agreed to pay more than \$8 million in forfeiture and restitution to the federal government and the state of Arkansas under the terms of a non-prosecution agreement, in which the charity admitted the criminal conduct of its former officers and employees.

Several former executives from the charity, former members of the Arkansas state legislature, and others have pleaded guilty in federal court as part of the long-running, multi-jurisdiction investigation, including the following:

- Former Chief Operating Officer, Bontiea Bernedette Goss, previously of Springfield, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in September 2022](#) to her role in a conspiracy to commit bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds.
- Former Chief Financial Officer, Tommy “Tom” Ray Goss, husband of Bontiea Goss and also previously of Springfield, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in September 2022](#) to participating in the conspiracy by embezzling funds from the charity, as well as by paying bribes and kickbacks to elected public officials in Arkansas. Tom Goss also pleaded guilty to one count of aiding and assisting in the preparation and presentation of a false tax return.
- Former Chief Executive Officer, Marilyn Luann Nolan of Springfield, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in November 2018](#) to her role in a conspiracy to embezzle and misapply the funds of a charitable organization that received federal funds.

- Former Director of Operations and Executive Vice President Robin Raveendran, of Little Rock, Arkansas, [pleaded guilty in June 2019](#) to conspiracy to commit bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds.
- Former executive and head of clinical operations Keith Fraser Noble, of Rogersville, Missouri, [pleaded guilty in September 2019](#) to concealment of a known felony.
- Former employee and head of operations and lobbying in Arkansas, Milton Russell Cranford, aka Rusty, of Rogers, Arkansas, was sentenced to seven years in federal prison after pleading guilty to one count of federal program bribery.
- Political consultant Donald Andrew Jones, aka D.A. Jones, of Willingboro, New Jersey, [pleaded guilty in December 2017](#) to his role in a conspiracy from April 2011 to January 2017 to steal from an organization that receives federal funds.
- Former Arkansas State Representative Eddie Wayne Cooper, of Melbourne, Arkansas, [pleaded guilty in February 2018](#) to conspiracy to embezzle more than \$4 million from Preferred Family Healthcare.
- Former Arkansas State Senator and State Representative Henry “Hank” Wilkins IV was [sentenced in January 2023](#) for his role in a conspiracy to commit federal program bribery and devising a scheme and artifice to defraud and deprive the citizens of the state of Arkansas of their right to honest services.

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Jonathan D. Ross for the Eastern District of Arkansas, U.S. Attorney David Clay Fowlkes for the Western District of Arkansas, U.S. Attorney Teresa A. Moore for the Western District of Missouri, Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division, Special Agent in Charge Charles A. Dayoub of the FBI Kansas City Field Office, and Special Agent in Charge Christopher J. Altemus Jr. of the IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Dallas Field Office made the announcement.

The FBI, IRS-CI, and the Offices of the Inspectors General from the Departments of Justice, Labor, and the FDIC investigated the cases.

Senior Litigation Counsel Marco A. Palmieri, Director of Enforcement & Litigation for the Election Crimes Branch Sean F. Mulryne, and Trial Attorney Jacob Steiner of the Criminal Division’s Public Integrity Section; Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie Mazzanti for the Eastern District of Arkansas; Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall Eggert and Assistant U.S. Attorney Shannon T. Kempf for the Western District of Missouri; and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Aaron L. Jennen and Steven M. Mohlhenrich for the Western District of Arkansas are prosecuting the separate criminal cases. Former Assistant U.S. Attorneys Patrick Harris for the Eastern District of Arkansas and former Assistant U.S. Attorney Ben Wulff for the Western District of Arkansas provided significant assistance.

Topic(s):

Public Corruption

Component(s):

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